



United States
Department of
Agriculture

**Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service**

FY 2002



WILDLIFE SERVICES—TENNESSEE

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Tennessee

Every day, Tennessee residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, Tennessee WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

Tennessee is home to a diverse mix of urban and suburban settings, rural environments, forest and agricultural lands, and a wide array of wildlife species.

Tennessee WS works with associations, organizations, and individuals to protect residential property from loss and damage caused by starlings, blackbirds, pigeons, waterfowl, and skunks; and helps agricultural producers reduce losses from numerous species of predators and birds. The program also addresses serious beaver damage to Tennessee's transportation infrastructure, crops, and other natural resources. In addition to preserving natural and man-made resources, WS protects pilots, air passengers, and aircraft from dangerous wildlife collisions and assists in protecting human health and safety from communicable wildlife diseases.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting public safety and property from Canada goose, pigeon, starling, blackbird, and other wildlife damage
- Protecting natural resources, timber, agriculture, and transportation infrastructures from beaver damage
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Protecting municipal utility structures, residential property, and livestock from vulture damage
- Protecting public safety from wildlife diseases

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Tennessee:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing problems caused by starlings, blackbirds, and vultures
- Controlling wildlife vectors of rabies
- Protecting timber and forest resources from beaver and rodent damage
- Reducing goose damage through avian infertility



technical assistance can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Air Travel—Every year, lives are endangered worldwide and billions of dollars are wasted when wildlife damage aircraft. Wildlife strikes cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$470 million annually and can pose severe hazards to passengers and flight crews. According to recent Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reports, Tennessee airports average more than 70 wildlife strikes per year, including an incident involving a major jetliner that aborted takeoff after a bird was ingested into one of the plane's engines. Three passengers were injured during emergency evacuation of the plane.

WS is recognized internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) continually conducts research to understand the nature of wildlife hazards at airports, develop management tools to reduce these hazards, and provide airport personnel with information to manage or prevent these hazards.

In applying this scientific expertise, the Tennessee WS program provides assistance to several airports, both civilian and military, each year. In addition to offering technical assistance, WS also provides training and direct operational management. On-site evaluations, as well as comprehensive Wildlife Hazard assessments are completed before direct management is conducted. For these Tennessee airports, the threat of wildlife strikes was most often associated with the presence of wildlife roosting and foraging on or around the airfields. WS' specialists were able to reduce wildlife related hazards by as much as 90 percent at these airports.

Protecting Human Health and Safety, Property, and Structures

Canada geese, starlings, vultures, and other migratory birds cause severe structural, agricultural, and property damage, as well as threaten the health and safety of Tennessee residents each year. Damages related to these species include power outages resulting from nest building activities, livestock losses from predation, and health risks associated with fecal contamination. WS scientists at NWRC are working to understand and develop recommendations to deal with vultures that prey on livestock. They are also studying diseases associated with the fecal matter of waterfowl that can make people sick.

The Canada goose population in Tennessee alone is estimated at 70,000 birds and rising. Most Canada goose damage involves urban environments, with concerns about sanitation, water quality, and aesthetics from bird droppings. In addition, golf courses, parks, and other recreational areas experience extensive damage to turf, fairways, and greens from feeding birds. WS biologists provide help to the public through direct assistance, damage management seminars, and one-on-one advice. WS captures and relocates several thousand waterfowl a year in Tennessee, and addresses more than 500 requests for assistance with migratory birds each year.

Protecting Transportation, Timber, Crops, and Natural Resources from Beaver Damage

WS conducts beaver damage management in Tennessee to remove problem beavers that cause flooding and damage on roadways, bridges, timber lands, and wildlife management areas. WS biologists estimate their efforts save more than \$3 million in resources annually. This dollar figure represents damage that was prevented as a result of WS' intervention. WS activities minimize costly road repairs and reduce flooding to timber lands and agricultural areas.

Stopping the Spread of Raccoon Rabies—In August of 2002, Tennessee joined the Appalachian Ridge Project to stop the westward spread of raccoon rabies. More than 180,000 oral rabies vaccination baits were distributed by hand and by air across a seven county area in eastern Tennessee. Raccoons that ingest the bait, become vaccinated against the deadly disease. The cooperative effort, led by WS, is working to create a rabies-free barrier in the eastern United States where the raccoon strain of rabies is a threat to wildlife populations, pets, livestock, and humans. The on-going project also includes, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Vermont, and Virginia. Tennessee, which has never had a documented case of raccoon rabies, is an integral part of the vaccination program because it is surrounded by States where the disease is already endemic.

Looking to the Future

For Tennessee, public health and safety, urban wildlife, and beaver damage have become the growing concerns for wildlife managers. Increased urbanization and expansion into formerly rural areas coupled with escalating waterfowl, white-tailed deer, coyote, beaver, and other wildlife populations has led to a rise in wildlife conflicts with people. Increased travel through Tennessee airports, combined with a growth in the population of numerous species of birds and wildlife has created a greater need for airport managers to deal with threats posed by wildlife.

Other urban and suburban conflicts involve threats to human health and safety and damage to homes, buildings, lawns, utility structures, and other property. In addition, Tennessee's growing beaver population is causing greater damage to the State's agricultural crops, timber, roadways, and natural resources as a lack of recreational trapping and expanding habitat have allowed their numbers to flourish. As WS works to provide the people of Tennessee with safe, effective, and humane assistance for their wildlife conflicts, the growing number and variety of wildlife-related issues must be balanced with available program resources.

Tennessee Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

